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lumine our hazy atmosphere: may again impart strength and vigour to our exhausted country, and restore her to her primitive state of industry, contentment, and happiness.

MARCELLUS.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

THE advantages which arise from the dissemination of political and literary knowledge, among the efficient members of a free state, are at the present crisis sufficiently evident. Enlightened views of the basis of civil society, and of the principles upon which political systems have been organized, are the only sure means of becoming acquainted with the nature of true liberty, and of those privileges to which the individuals of every free commonwealth have a right.

This information the liberty of the press makes free to every individual who is possessed of either curiosity or interest to investigate these important subjects. The expenses are but trifling, when compared with the enjoyments which a rational and intelligent mind must reap from such researches. The opposite interests of the rival nations of Europe have often called the warrior to the field, and swept her most fertile and flourishing countries with the besom of destruction. The military prowess of the warrior has often been employed by the cabinet, to carry into execution plans of injustice. The subjects of each nation, from the representations of their rulers, are led to consider themselves as injured, to consider their cause as the cause of justice, and of mankind. The Patriots enter the field, inspired by a false love of their country! Their swords are stained with each other's blood! History records their achievements; their actions are sung

by the poet, and the orator is lavish of his encomiums on their valour, and patriotism. Here, however, the philosopher proposes a question, which must throw a gloom over our airy speculations. What good have these achievements been productive of to mankind at large? Have they increased our happiness? Have they increased our domestic comforts? Have they improved our minds, or added to the number of our social or benevolent virtues? Have they increased our population? Have they improved our arts and manufactures? Have they advanced the interests of polite literature, or added to the resources of nations? I presume, we will be found inadequate to return a pleasing answer to these questions.

To what source then will we trace those innumerable evils which are the consequence of a state of warfare among civilized nations? I presume we shall find them in a high degree owing to a want of information with respect to civil rights among the individuals of a state. In consequence of this circumstance, the selfish and unjust views of rulers are imposed upon the multitude by the talents of the statesman and the orator. Robbery which in the case of an individual is considered as a crime of the most glaring nature, is, with respect to nations, considered not only pardonable, but honourable. The order of nature appears in this instance to be completely inverted. An individual acting for himself is accountable for his actions, and is punished or rewarded according to his merits. A government acts for others, and millions are interested in their proceedings; yet here we have seldom the means of making them accountable. When an error, in this case, is committed, the only mode of redress is to use our best endeavours to prevent its recurrence. Different opinions concerning the

conduct of governments, are the fruitful sources of internal discontents and dissensions. The want of correct sources of information, the influence of malignant passions and principles, and limited views of the nature of government, have a tendency to foment domestic differences, and render them productive of the most disagreeable consequences. I would not, however, be understood as intimating that these are the only causes of internal discord; there are a number of others, which the penetrating eye of the practical politician and moralist will readily discover. Those which we have mentioned may with propriety be considered as the principal, and they evidently have their foundation in ignorance, self-interest, or wilful misrepresentation. How then shall this be remedied? Will that happy period ever arrive, when the individuals of our commonwealth shall have attained to that degree of knowledge which will render them competent judges of those circumstances which may affect their own welfare? I answer in the affirmative, and draw my conclusion from the experience of nations, as it is recorded in the faithful pages of history.

Athens, as a commonwealth, was for a long time flourishing, free and happy. Her most celebrated lawgivers and generals were taken from the plough, and educated by a generous and enlightened public. Every individual was an orator, and instilled the genuine principles of freedom into his brethren. Stern and untractable, when, in defence of their own rights, they were at the same time generous, free, and affable towards their neighbours. The members of this free and happy constitution were, as occasion or necessity required, legislators, and warriors, orators, or philosophers. Learning was cultivated with so much

success, that they were looked up to as models for imitation by ancient nations. In painting, sculpture, and eloquence, even the moderns have not equalled them.

When such were the effects of a general dissemination of knowledge among the inferior orders of the people in the small territory of Athens, with what pleasing consequences would it not be attended among more extensive and populous nations?

The drooping spirit of humanity would be cheered by such a prospect. The nations of the world would no longer be desolated by the scourge of war. Peace and unanimity would reign at home. Commerce, the arts, and manufactures, would flourish; and sufficient inducements would be offered to the husbandman, for exhausting his strength in the cultivation of the ground,

OCTAVIUS.

P.S. These reflections were suggested by the prospect of a News-room being established in Ballymoney, the plan of which is intended to include the several more valuable periodical publications of the day, among which it is intended your excellent Magazine shall have a place. If the above reflections meet your approbation, you will oblige a constant reader by their insertion.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

THE chief use of writing books being to disseminate knowledge, or facilitate its acquirement, it is necessary, in order to give them full effect, that the language should be plain and perspicuous; and especially in works which are intended for general perusal, it should be as much